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July 10, 1980

## NEW BOOKLET CHARTS EVANGELISM STUDY

NEW YORK -- The Rev. A. Wayne Schwab, Evangelism and Renewal Officer of the Episcopal Church Center, has announced publication of results of a three year study on a Pilot Project in Evangelism, Renewal, and Church Growth.

The report is the final assessment of a three year study by Dr. Robert L. Bonn of Bonn Research Inc., and professor of sociology at John Jay College in New York City.


The Pilot Project began in December of 1977 and concluded in December of 1979. It included ten parishes in the Dioceses of Newark, New York, and Long Island. The ten congregations include urban and suburban parishes working at various levels of involvement in the program. Dr. Bonn observes, "The results of the Evangelism, Renewal, and Church Growth Program participation are evident both in a more positive set of congregational statistics and in other key factors in the direction of parish life and activity."

The congregations showed increases in various combinations of the six membership measures used -- baptized members, present communicants, church school pupils, number of baptisms, and number of confirmations. The program participants "are doing better than either diocese on the membership measures." Comparisons of financial measures were also made.

Dr. Bonn also observes that one immensely significant result was to make congregations conscious and aware of the need to minister to and care for present and possible future members. A comparison of three of the experimental congregations with those of similar size and situation shows that the experimental congregations averaged 10% better in communicant growth.

Congregational involvement in the Evangelism, Renewal and Church Growth Program had a number of different aspects. On a planning level it meant that evangelism and renewal were taken as an explicit, intentional approach on the part of the rectors, vestries, or other special committees.

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On a programmatic level, involvement meant undertaking any of a variety of activities that were often unique or new to the parish: use of greeters at services; wearing of name tags; files to keep track of newcomers; telephone networks to bring people into contact with each other; nursery services; nursing home visitation; prayer; counseling; Bible study; picnics; and community programs.

Different activities were pursued by different congregations depending upon their unique needs and purposes.

On an organizational level involvement in the program meant that a parish: (1) submitted regular reports; (2) met regularly to share experiences; and (3) received publications offering a wide range of practical suggestions and comments.

Dr. Bonn observed, "The issue is not the particular set of ideas which is fed to the congregations, but whether or not the congregations assign a priority to evangelism and renewal. The main influence over whether or not evangelism and renewal take priority is the rector, whose support is critical. Yet, it is also necessary to have a committee or task force assigned to deal with evangelism and renewal. Finally, vestry approval and commitment of resources would appear to be essential for a viable and effective program of evangelism and renewal in the parish."

Dr. Bonn concludes his observations saying, "Evangelism and Renewal can be explicit, intentional activities undertaken by parishes. Once evangelism and renewal become defined as a high priority and actions are taken to support this priority, parishes can begin to show signs of growth and change. Growth in the number of disciples and in the depth of commitment of the church may not be immediate or dramatic but when undertaken seriously it can and does occur."

Mr. Schwab reports that, to the best of his knowledge, this is the first study of its kind of evangelism and renewal in Episcopal congregations. He notes further that the approach used by the ten congregations underlies the process set forth in Guidebook One: Getting Started, the First Three Years in the series "Guidebooks in Evangelism, Renewal, and Church Growth" published by Seabury Press at \$16.00 per copy. Copies of Dr. Bonn's report are available on request to the Evangelism and Renewal Office, Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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